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U.S. Army. Garrison Force, Palmyra Island.
History of U.S. Army on Palmyra Island.

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U. S. Army, Garrison Force, Palmyra Island S0017586

HISTORY OF U.S. ARMY ON PALMYRA ISLAND

U.S. ARMY MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE

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On 12 September 1943, CinCPAC notified COMHAWSEAFRON that Army units would relieve the 1st Defense Battalion on PALMYRA about 15 October 1943, and that it was expected that defenses would be materially reduced.

On 16 Sept. 1943, a plan was proposed by Lt. Gen. Robert C. Richardson, Jr. to CinCPOA, to relieve the 1st Marine Defense Battalion at PALMYRA about 15 October 43, by re-distributing the garrison of CHRISTMAS Island. One AA gun battery would man the 90mm AA guns and SCR-268 radar. One AA automatic weapons battery would man the 40mm AA guns. One AA searchlight platoon would man the searchlights and a SCR-268 radar. In addition there would be furnished two infantry companies (1 rifle and 1 heavy weapons) and a headquarters detachment and service units. On 29 September 1943, this plan was approved by Admiral C.W. Nimitz.

On 22 September 1943, the request was made by CG, USAFICPA to CinCPOA that certain equipment now in possession of the Marines on PALMYRA be transferred to the Army units upon their arrival. This included armament, ammunition, transportation, signal and engineer equipment, water stills, tanks, and refrigerators. Some of these items were allowed to remain by the Marines and some had to be replaced.

Officers of this task force, appointed during the first half of September, were as follows:

- CO - Lt. Col. Stuart C. Allingham, CAC
- Art. O Major Arthur H. Garvey, CAC
- S-2 - 1st Lt. Frank H. Reynolds, Jr., Inf.
- S-3 - Capt. Morgan J. Craig, 136th Inf.
- S-4 - Capt. Robert A. Liby, 123rd FA Bn.

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(PALMYRA Island History, cont'd.)

Adj. - 1st Lt. (later Capt.) Eugene R. Prouty, QM

Capt. James E. MacLennan, SC

1st Lt. Edwin F. Mengerson, Inf.

Chap. 1st Lt. Cecil C. Urch, Chaplain C.

2nd Lt. William B. Leonard, Ord.

2nd Lt. David D. Taylor, FA

WO George A. Phelps.

On 23 Sept. 43, warning order was given to CG, HAAAC for the movement of:

Battery 713, CA (AA), 90mm guns

Battery I, 97th CA (AA) 37mm AW

1st Platoon, Battery E, 93rd CA (AA) Searchlight.

On 25 Sept 43, warning orders were issued for the following:

Task Force Headquarters	9 Off.	1 WO	16 EM
Ordnance Detachment	1	-	13
Signal Detachment	1	-	37
Exchange Detachment	1	-	8
Chemical NCO	-	-	1

On 28 Sept. 43, it was agreed that the Marines would leave on PALMYRA and the Army would replace on OAHU:

2 - SCR-268 "A"
 2 - 1940 60" AA mobile S/L, with control, cables, power.
 2 - 1936 60" " " " " " " " " " "

On 29 Sept 43, it was agreed between CG, USAFICPA and CO 11th ND:

Four reefers would be left at Palmyra, without replacement by Army

Four - 10,000 gallon steel tanks and evaporators, now at Palmyra, would be removed by the Marines, and replaced by the Army.

On 30 Sept. 43, CG, HUA^SAFICPA sent an LOI to Lt. Col. Stuart C. Allingham. This stressed need for security, and appointed him CO of a Task Force to

(PALMYRA Island History, cont'd)

replace all Marine forces on PALMYRA Island not later than 15 October 43. He would operate under command of the Naval Commander of the island in defense thereof against land, sea, or air attack. All elements of the TF would be ready to depart on or about 3 October 43, water transportation to be furnished by AP&SC. Unloading would be in coordination with the Naval Commander at PALMYRA.

The composition of the Task Force was designated, 30 Sept. 1943, to be:

CA Battery #713 (AA)	4 Off	WO	112 EM	115 Total
Battery I, 97th CA (AA)	6		134	140
1st Plat, Battery E, 93d CA (AA)	1		54(64)*	55 (65*)
Co C, 102d Inf. (#)	5		143	148
Co D, " (#)	4		178	182
1 Plat, Co C, 376th Port Bn (##)	1		68	69
Hq & Hq Detachment	9	1	16	26
QM Detachment	1		16	17
Ord "	1		13	14
Chem "			1	1
Signal "	1		37	38
Post Exchange Det	1		4	5
Medical Det	3		20	23
	<u>37</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>796</u>	<u>844</u>
			806 *	844 *

(* Increased 6 Dec 43)

(# From APO 915)

(## " " 914)

On 1 Oct. 43, the CO of PALMYRA Naval Station, Capt. R.N. Hunter, USN, advised CinCPAC that he did not believe PALMYRA should be left without seacoast artillery protection. Personnel to man at least three batteries of 5" (51 cal) guns were needed much more than the Negro port company which was scheduled to come. Admiral Ghormley replied, 6 Oct., that Army personnel planned to man the 5" guns and that the negro port company would probably have to be accepted.

On 8 October 43, Special Order #194 of Hq APO 915 indicated the departure and gave a passenger list of the following:

1st Station Hospital (Capt. Howard L. Cockerham, Jr.)	2 Off	14 EM
Med Det, 1st Bn, 102 Inf.		3
" " 429th CA Bn		3

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(PALMYRA Island History, cont'd)

353rd QM Co. (Comp)	(1st Lt. Leo L. Frederick, QM)	1 Off	16 EM
Co C, 102nd Inf.	(1st Lt. Eri D. Bolick)	5	116
Co D, " "	(Capt. Michael J. O'Connor)	4	157

On 28 Oct. 43, the following material was reported to be in excess of that needed for the tactical mission:

- 4 - 3" AA guns
- 1 - Director, complete
- 1 - Height finder, complete
- 2 - telescopes
- 1 - box of tools
- 3 - Automatic 20 mm guns
- 6 - barrel assemblies, sights, etc for these 20mm guns.

On 10 November, Lt. Col. Allingham reported that all seacoast weapons were being maintained and manned as a secondary mission of personnel present on other tactical ~~mission~~ assignments, and were receiving training in their use. Two batteries (4 guns) 5" /51 Naval and 1 battery (2 guns) 3" /50 Naval were being manned by the Army. One battery (2 guns) 5" /51 and two 3" /50 Naval guns were manned by Naval personnel. Health conditions were reported excellent and excellent cooperation being maintained with the Navy. More field glasses were needed properly to man all CPs.

On 18 March 1944, Lt. Col. Allingham recommended the following reduction in the Army garrison strength at PALMYRA:

To remain with the Task Force:

Hq Detachment, (Himself, Capt. Prouty,	5 Off	8 EM	13
1st Lt. Charles A. Maher, Sig,			
QM, Eng, 1st Lt. Frank H. Reynolds,			
S-2, S-3, Postal, and 1st Lt.			
Cecil C. Urch, Chaplain)			
Signal Corps Det	-	24	24
QM Det	-	12	12
Ord Det (2nd Lt. William B. Leonard)	1	8	9
Med Det (Capt. Milton Manette)	1	9	10
Exch Det	-	4	4
CWS NCO	-	1	1
Trans Det	-	21	21
	7	87	94
To return to Oahu (by air, if possible)	9 1	92	62

(PALMYRA Island History, cont'd)

On 11 April 44, CG, USAFICPA in a radio to CO, AGF PALMYRA said; The complete evacuation of army forces of your command is directed. Desire the date on which your organization can be ready for movement, together with complete organizational equipment, sector equipment, and all supplies.

During March, 2 companies of Infantry and 1 automatic weapons battery were shipped to Oahu, and all excess property was returned to the appropriate service depots, except barbed wire and anchor posts. The Marine's telephone wire also was salvaged. The Joint Army and Navy Communications Center and Radio station on Marine Island were closed on 9 March.

On 3 April 44 the following guns and positions had been manned:

Battery D, 93rd AAA,	90 mm guns #1,2,3,4
(Aviation I.)	SCR 268 Radar
	20mm guns #7,8,9
	30 cal HMG Pillbox #12.
Battery B, 294th AAA (S/L) Bn.	
(SEFawn I)	Searchlights #1-5 (#6 in reserve)
(Aviation I.)	20mm guns #1 & 11
(Eastern I.)	30 cal HMG Pillboxes 3,13,16,24,25,32.
(Bird I, Kaula I.)	
Navy: (Cooper I.)	40 mm guns 3,4,5,6
	30 cal HMG pillboxes 5,6,9,11
	20mm guns 2 & 4.

On 29 April 44, no installations were being manned by the Army Garrison force. The Navy was manning positions on Cooper Island and Kaula Tower, and additional Naval positions were proposed.

On 14 April 44, 1st Lt. Frank H. Reynolds, Inf. (Adjutant) assumed command of the Headquarters and Hq Detachment. On 3 May 44, he reported that a conservation program of priority duty has underway. Quanset or Nissen huts were being dismantled and crated for shipment to Oahu. Also, mattresses and iron beds were being stored for shipment. Salvage of clothing had been completed, and the Non-commissioned officers club had been closed 28 April.

PALMYRA ISLAND

PALMYRA is a coral atoll, 960 nautical miles south by west of Honolulu, 5° 53' N., 162° 05' W. It used to consist of about 50 low, sandy islets surrounding three small lagoons. The islets stood on a platform of coral reef which dried in places at low tide and which completely surrounded the lagoons. Today the western and central lagoons have been connected by a dredged channel, which leads westward to the sea; and the islets have been connected by a causeway on which there is a road, extending from the NW (Sawle Point) around the eastern end to the SW (Home) Island.

The area of the dry land, formerly 250 acres, has been much increased by the dredged rock. The largest (Cooper) Island is the site of an airfield.

The islands formerly were densely covered with trees and bushes. So heavy is the rainfall that the ground beneath the trees and coconut palms is carpeted with birdsnest ferns and other plants, despite the fact that the ground is only about six feet above sealevel. ~~at~~ Many of the islands have been cleared or thinned of vegetation; but it remains dense in places.

The island may have been seen by Capt. Edmund Fanning in 1798. However it was first visited and named by Captain Sawle, who sought shelter there in the American ship Palmyra in 1802. It was visited by various other ships and attempts were made to make commercial use of the island. The late Judge Henry E Cooper acquired ~~right~~ title to Palmyra, and in 1922 sold all but two islands to Leslie and Ellen Fullard-Leo of Honolulu. The U.S. Navy made preliminary surveys in 1938, and commenced the construction of a base in November 1939. The question of ownership has been under dispute in U.S. District Court, but it is American territory.

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Original Page No. 9
Phoenix, Line and Union
Islands, 1 June 1951

AIRFIELD EVALUATION

Line Islands
COUNTRY: Cooper Island

COUNTRY CODE: 686

MAP REF:

WAC 843 1:1,000,000
Afld Map 6N-158W(73)

CLASS: 2

INSTALLATION NO.: 8400

ALT. (FT.): 6

DATE LATEST INFO: Mar 51

NAME: PALMYRA

ALTERNATE NAME/S:

Cooper AF

COORDS: 5 52 N
162 06 W

LOCATION AND LANDMARKS: 957 mi from Oahu, Hawaiian Islands. Heading of 14°40' from Palmyra Island. N side of Palmyra Atoll.

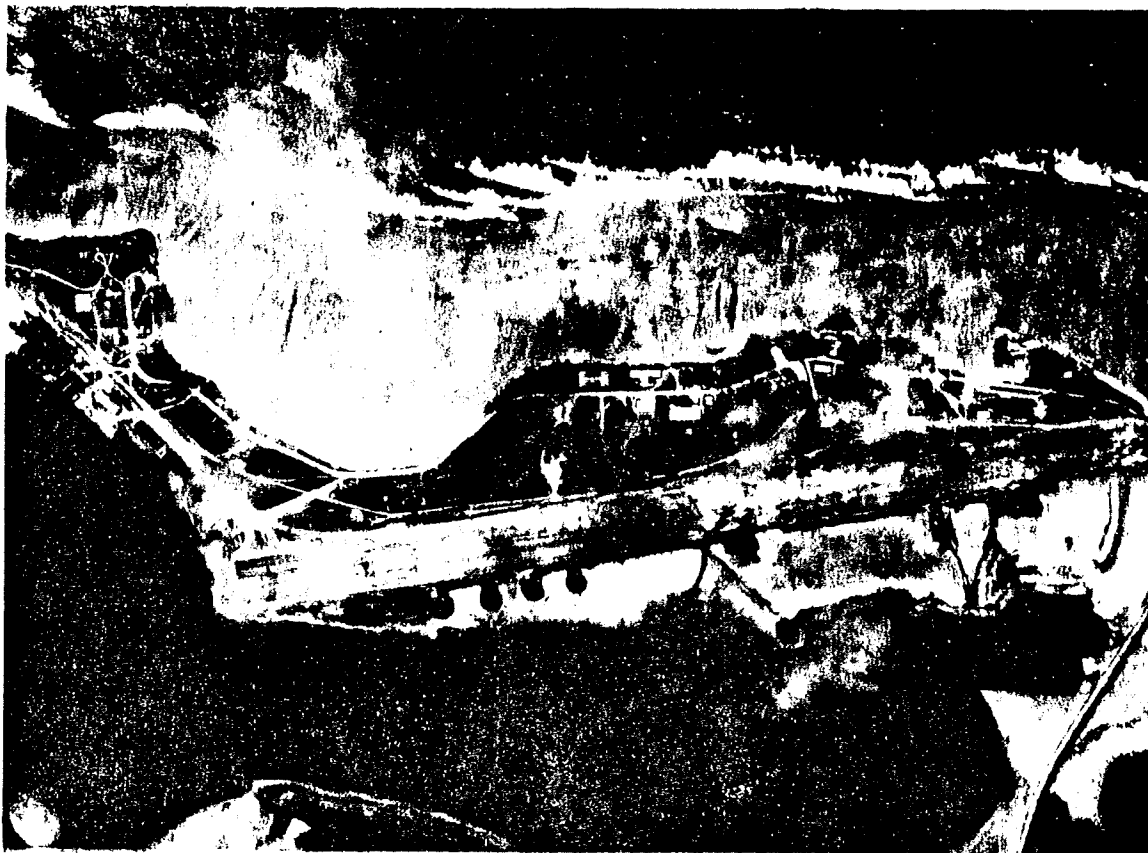


PHOTO OR SKETCH DATA (21 June 1948) (73) (K-17-APU 959)(S)(11)(7AD) (153.9-7000)

<u>RWY DIMENSIONS:</u>	<u>ORIENTATION</u>	<u>SURFACE</u>	<u>CAPACITY:</u>	<u>EXTENSIBILITY:</u>
6000' x 300'	ENE/WSW	Rolled asphalt and coral	93,000	None

TAXIWAYS AND PARKING: No twy; 13 RVT's parking area totaling 77,221 sq yds.

OBSTRUCTIONS: Clear approaches.

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AIRFIELD EVALUATION

NAVIGATION FACILITIES—(1) RADIO (2) COMMUNICATIONS (3) AEROLOGY (4) LIGHTING:

- 1.) No info 3) No info
- 2) Local telephones. Telegraph to Canton Island.
- 4) Rwy (inoperative)

SERVICES—(1) POL (2) REPAIRS:

- 2) None
- 1) Normal supply on hand; 100/130 oct; 20,000 gals; 1120 oil; 1,000 gals.
Gasoline storage capacity: 850,000 gals. No tank storage of oil.

FIXED INSTALLATIONS—(1) HANGARS (2) PERSONNEL ACCOMMODATIONS (3) MISC. BLDGS:

- 1) 1 nose type
- 2) Hotel near fld can accommodate 100. Accommodations on the fld for 410 personnel.
- 3) Warehouse.

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES—(1) ROAD (2) RAIL (3) WATER:

- 2) None
- 1) Road to installations extending around Atoll from Strawn Island to Sand Island.
- 3) Dock on N side of Paradise Island, 3/4 mi SSW. Ship channel in Lagoon just W.

OPERATORS: Private (CAA leased)

USERS: Trans-Hawaiian Airlines bi-monthly.

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT: This is a good all year round base and with very little work could be put back into top condition. Would make a good interceptor base. It would take jet tactical and interceptor ftrs and limited HB's. Afld, is situated close enough to the more expandable Casady AFB to become highly valuable. Fog is unknown on this atoll and the usual visibility is 12 mi. All water used is rain water. 1,600,000 gal. catchment system.

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Original Page No. 13
Phoenix, Line and Union
Islands, 1 June 1951

AIRFIELD EVALUATION

<u>COUNTRY:</u> Line Island Palmyra Island	<u>CLASS:</u> 5	<u>NAME:</u> SAND ISLAND
<u>COUNTRY CODE:</u> 686	<u>INSTALLATION NO.:</u> 8402	<u>ALTERNATE NAME/S:</u>
<u>MAP REF:</u> WAC 843 1:1,000,000 Afld Map 6N-158W (73)	<u>ALT. (FT.):</u> 6	
	<u>DATE LATEST INFO:</u> Dec 48	<u>COORDS:</u> 5 52N 162 06W

LOCATION AND LANDMARKS: On Sand Island parallel to channel entrance to West Lagoon; at SW corner of Palmyra Island.

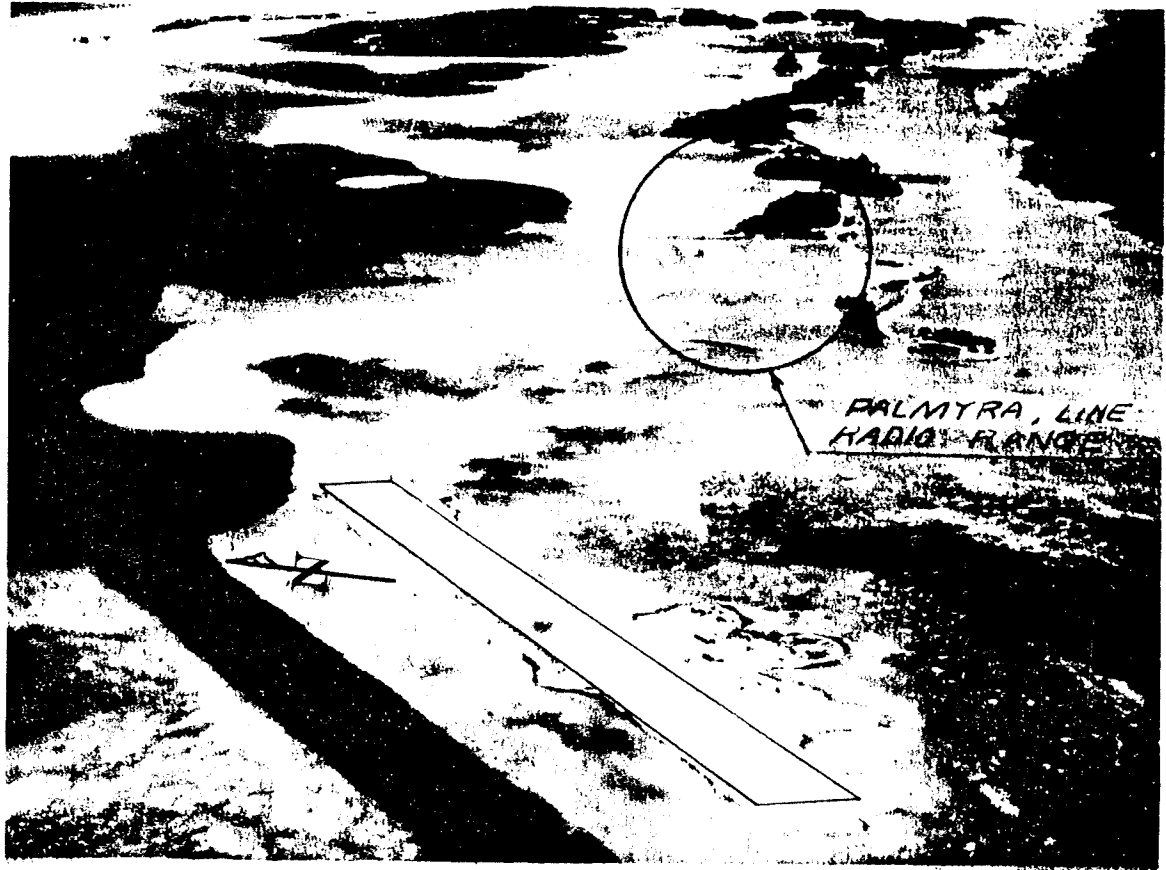


PHOTO OR SKETCH DATA: Dec 4, 1943

<u>RWY DIMENSIONS:</u>	<u>ORIENTATION:</u>	<u>SURFACE:</u>	<u>CAPACITY:</u>	<u>EXTENSIBILITY:</u>
2350' x 200'	NE/SW	Coral	No info	None

TAXIWAYS AND PARKING: No info

OBSTRUCTIONS: Clear approaches.

SECRET

SECRET

AIRFIELD EVALUATION

NAVIGATION FACILITIES—(1) RADIO (2) COMMUNICATIONS (3) AEROLOGY (4) LIGHTING:

- 1) No info 2) No info 3) No info 4) No info

SERVICES—(1) POL (2) REPAIRS:

- 1) No info 2) No info

FIXED INSTALLATIONS—(1) HANGARS (2) PERSONNEL ACCOMMODATIONS (3) MISC. BLDGS:

- 1) No info 2) No info 3) No info

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES—(1) ROAD (2) RAIL (3) WATER:

- 2) None

1) Road to installations extending around atoll from Sand Island to Strawn Island.

3) Ship channel just NW.

OPERATORS: None

USERS: None

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT: An extensive rehabilitation program would be required before any extended future opns. Fld has no military value other than use as a parking area or crash strip.